



46TH DISTRICT
STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 30014
LANSING, MI 48209-7514
PHONE: (517) 373-1798
FAX: (517) 373-8574
E-MAIL: johnreilly@house.mi.gov

MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JOHN REILLY
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

COMMITTEES:
FINANCIAL LIABILITY REFORM,
VICE CHAIR
JOINT COMMITTEE ON
ADMINISTRATIVE RULES, VICE CHAIR
EDUCATION REFORM
ENERGY POLICY
REGULATORY REFORM

December 7, 2017

Dear Chairman Kelly and Members of the Committee on Education Reform,

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify in support of my legislation, House Bill 4501, which would end the mandatory administration of the WorkKeys exam to 11th graders in Michigan as part of the Michigan Merit Exam.

Over the past months, numerous school administrators have expressed concerns about the WorkKeys exam to me.

The WorkKeys exam purports to measure career-readiness, but it is obvious, even from a casual review of sample test questions, that skills tested are really basic algebra, reading comprehension, and problem solving. The questions use career scenarios, but this is only an appearance, not an accurate portrayal of the skills tested.

For example, a sample math question reads:

An industrial cleaner is manufactured using only the 3 secret ingredients A, B, and C, which are mixed in the ratio of 2:3:5, respectively, by weight. How many pounds of secret ingredient B are in a 42-pound (net weight) bucket of this cleaner?

This is a simple math problem. That the scenario involves an industrial cleaner is irrelevant. It serves a cosmetic role to make the test appear to be uniquely suited for career readiness, but math is the skill tested.

We test students extensively, and we grade them. These assessments are ample to demonstrate career-readiness.

This is only my opinion, but it's an opinion shared by teachers and administrators in my district and across the state.

School officials in my district have unanimously indicated that they would not administer the exam if given the option.

They agree that the exam is not a useful assessment of career-readiness.

And since introducing the bill, my office has received unsolicited praise from school employees and officials across the state.

I spoke with a school principal from Charlotte visiting the Capitol for a legislative luncheon, and he said he would be thrilled to see the WorkKeys mandate lifted.

I received an email from a schoolteacher from Wyandotte who applauded the bill and offered to help pass the bill.

In her email, she wrote:

I'm a high school social studies teacher.

The testing for students has become so cumbersome and time consuming... I cannot tell you how much the testing disrupts school, my students learning and classroom time.

In addition we have put so much emphasis on these tests the students are stressed beyond belief.

I walk through the school as we are testing and say to our students, "you are not a test score. Your value is beyond a test measurement."

Her sentiments touch on a broader issue than just the low value of the test itself: Our teachers and students are weary from state mandates. As legislators, we like to think we know what's best for our students, and bureaucrats surely feel the same. But exercising our authority, we cut down our teachers, who genuinely love their children, sincerely want them to achieve their full potential, and have the day-to-day insight and professional experience to know what's best for them.

Eliminating the Work Keys mandate would truly be a game-changer for our teachers.

But let me be clear: This mandate does not support Career and Tech Education (CTE), nor ending it harm our efforts to promote the skilled trades.

Oakland County superintendents are leading the way as innovators in the CTE field. Students in Oakland County schools partner with the Oakland Schools Technical Campus (OTSC) to become experts in various CTE fields, including cyber-security, cosmetology, collision repair, and financing, among others.

I have attached a complete list of OSTC programs for your convenience.

I have also attached a letter signed by these same 28 Oakland County superintendents endorsing HB 4501. The letter lays out 3 key points:

1. The WorkKeys test is an administrative burden. It costs millions of dollars to administer statewide. The current Michigan Merit Exam takes at least 8.5 hours of school time to administer.
2. Fewer and fewer Oakland County businesses and employers are using the results of the exam. WorkKeys may work for schools and businesses in some parts of the state, and under my bill, they would maintain their right to use it, but in Oakland County the test is not appreciated. I believe our local districts have the capacity to decide if the exam will be best for their schools moving forward.
3. The instruction time reclaimed by not administering the exam will benefit our students.

Ending the WorkKeys mandate will allow for our school districts to decide what is in their best interest.

I trust our local schools to do what is best for teachers, students, and their community partners.

Matt Outlaw, Superintendent of the Brandon School District, is here with me today to elaborate on the benefits of ending the WorkKeys mandate.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and I look forward to your questions.

Sincerely,

John Reilly

Representative John Reilly
Representative John Reilly

Connect your Dreams and Goals with Career Success!

OSTC (Oakland Schools Technical Campus) is a valuable extension of your high school and brings you customized, self-directed learning that guides you toward future career success. Your career training and skill development takes place at one of four, state-of-the-art, multi-million dollar technical campuses in Oakland County.

Our wide-range curriculum offerings are found in nine nationally-recognized career "clusters" and developed around broad occupational areas. Each career cluster provides concentrated learning through different, yet related, career options.

Our curriculum offerings center around nationally recognized occupational areas. Each program provides concentrated learning through distinct, though related, career options. Our programs include:

- Agriscience and Environmental Technologies
- Automotive Technology
- Collision Repair and Refinishing
- Computer Networking
- Computer Programming
- Construction Technology
- Cosmetology
- Criminal Justice
- Culinary Arts and Hospitality
- Cyber Security
- Energy and Electrical Technologies
- Engineering and Emerging Technologies - Machining
- Engineering and Emerging Technologies - Mechatronics
- Engineering and Emerging Technologies - Welding
- Entrepreneurship and Advanced Marketing
- Health Sciences
- Medium Heavy Truck and Equipment
- Visual Imaging

